Interview with Everett Drumright

The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Project

AMBASSADOR EDWARD DRUMRIGHT

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Q: Mr. Ambassador, in your original interview with Lee Cotterman, you traced your diplomatic career starting in Shanghai in 1935, through your last post as chief of mission in Taipei in 1958 through 1962. In the course of your career, you met and worked with many fascinating people, figures who made and moved history. Could we today discuss some of these people in greater length and depth and, in the process, get a more subjective view of events?

Starting in Shanghai, who were the Americans and Chinese with whom you came in contact and who left an impression, positive or negative?

DRUMRIGHT: As for Shanghai, of course, in the consulate general we had Edwin S. Cunningham. He had been consul general there for almost 20 years when I came onto the post. He was an old line officer. He came from Tennessee. He was basically a treaty port type, having lived in Shanghai all those years. I think he was a hard-working officer, and he certainly devoted himself to looking after American interests there.

He was followed by Nathaniel Davis, an interim appointee, who later was ambassador to Israel. Davis was a hard-working officer, but hadn't enough time there to make much of a mark.

He was followed by Clarence E. Gauss, who had a long career in China, albeit one that was limited to the treaty ports. By “treaty ports,” I mean those cities along the coast of China. Gauss had a legal mind. In fact, he wrote a consular manual, a legal manual, for the Service that was followed for years. He was much onto his consular work. He was conscientious and very hard working, but he seemed, to me, never to penetrate much into the Chinese mind. He had never made a study of China, as far as I could see, or studied the language or the history of the culture. He was mostly intent on his work as a consular officer. Later, of course, as I think I mentioned in my previous interview, he became ambassador to China in Chungking, and spent about three years there. I think he was a superb consul general, but he wasn't cut out, in my opinion, for the job of being ambassador because of his limitations in knowledge of the Chinese and what made the tick.

I think that covers—

Q: In terms of contact in the consulate general, in addition to taking care of American interests, I believe this was the time that the Japanese were intruding themselves into China. Did you have occasion to come in contact with any of the Japanese who had an impact on Chinese history at this time?

DRUMRIGHT: I knew a consul in the Japanese consulate general, and I've forgotten his name [ed. note: “Terry” Terasaki who later served as interpreter in the meeting between MacArthur and Emperor Hirohito]. It's been a long time ago, 40 or 50 years ago. He was married to an American girl, by the way, and I think it was his idea to try to resolve differences between the Japanese and the Americans. But, of course, later he was reassigned to the foreign ministry in Tokyo, and I think he was onto that kind of work. But

as you know, the Japanese are not a people you get to know very well. They live unto themselves mostly, and I didn't have many contacts with Japanese.

Q: What about the differences between the Chinese factions? Was this apparent in Shanghai in this period, and was there any contact with Kuomintang leaders or communist leaders?

DRUMRIGHT: We, in the consulate, had, through our position, contact with the mayor of Shanghai, who at that time was a man named Chung. Chung later became Secretary General of the Kuomintang, so he was a party man. But I could say that Shanghai was somewhat out of the center of political happenings and events in those days.

Q: That's interesting. What happened in Hangzhou? What was the situation there, and who were some of the personalities that you came into contact in that position?

DRUMRIGHT: I had two assignments to Hangzhou. When I went there first in 1932—that is more than 57 years ago—Walter A. Adams was the consul general. He was not what we would call an old China hand, even though he spent some years in China. He did not pursue the language or seem to make much of a study of China, and, in fact, when I had a chance to go to Peking to study Chinese, I asked him what his view was, and he suggested it would be better if I didn't do it. As a consular officer, I think he was a good one. He was not married at that time, although he did get married later. He played a lot of bridge and he went to the club. He enjoyed himself in his post there.

For the second assignment there, when I went to the consulate general, we had Paul R. Josselyn. Paul was a China language officer and was a good officer, but he suffered from ill health and was not, therefore, very active.

As for activities in Hangzhou, there weren't very many during my first assignment, which lasted less than one year. I was actually onto economic work mostly there, submitting

reports monthly and, in between, interim reports to the commercial attach#, who had his office in Shanghai.

My second assignment there came as the Japanese were stepping up their activities in China, and, in fact, within a few months of my arrival there in July of 1937, the war started. From then on, our whole activities were devoted in one way or another to wartime efforts, such as repatriating our citizens and reporting on conditions back there in the west and so forth.

Q: From Hangzhou, you moved to Chungking for a three-year period.

DRUMRIGHT: I was in Hangzhou—well, I went there in March of '37 on a temporary assignment, by the way, that time. I expected to go back to Shanghai. But, of course, the war came and my assignment was made permanent. I continued to serve there and joined the embassy. I went over from the consulate general to the embassy, I think about February of 1938, on the recommendation of the ambassador, Nelson T. Johnson. The embassy had its office in the consulate general, so we were working closely together, in any case. Of course, we stayed there until the first of August of '38, when after the Chinese government had removed its capital for the second time, its temporary capital, first to Hangzhou and then to Chungking, the embassy had to follow on. So we left about the first of August on one of our US Navy gunboats, and went up to Chungking.

Q: My knowledge of what was happening there at that period comes mainly from Teddy White's book. But it was replete with all of these names that later became so important in the events of China and the relationships. Did you have contact with any of these people?

DRUMRIGHT: Are you speaking of Chinese or American?

Q: Chinese and Americans, yes.

DRUMRIGHT: First of all, Nelson Johnson and Willis R. Peck headed our mission up there. Johnson stayed as ambassador there until about April of '41, when he was replaced by Gauss. Willis Peck was the counselor and remained there. He was an old China hand, by the way. He knew the language well. He had come of a missionary family in China and was well versed in the Chinese, was very useful to the ambassador, who also, by the way, was a language officer, one of the first who had served in Peking as a language officer starting in 1906, I believe. So those two men were language officers. They got on very well with the Chinese officialdom and other Chinese. They knew them, knew how to deal with them, they could talk with them, and they got along with the top-flight Chinese such as Chiang Kai-shek and the foreign minister, a Mr. Wong, at that time. We had close contact, in other words, with the Chinese officials. We were sympathetic to their cause. We wanted them to come out on top in their defense against this Japanese aggression, and so we supported them.

Q: If I recall correctly, the communists were also, for a time, in Chungking.

DRUMRIGHT: They had a representative. They had a small representative's office in Chungking all throughout the war period. Their number-one there was a well-known Chinese by the name of Zhou En-lai. We knew him. I knew him fairly well. I made contact with him as early as 1939. I used to invite him and some of his cohorts up to my residence on a weekend, and we would have long talks on the situation, with Zhou, of course, seeking to obtain our sympathy for the cause of the communists and so forth, naturally; that was his business.

Yes, we knew them, and we knew fairly well what they were doing. We reported on the imbroglio between the government and the communists, and I think, in general, we reported it pretty honestly and carefully.

Q: What was your impression of Zhou as a political leader?

DRUMRIGHT: He was a very adroit fellow. He could get along with anybody if he wished to. I always had a friendly relationship with him, except the last time I ever saw him, which was in the fall of 1944, when I had come back from an assignment up in the area not far from where the communists were hanging out. On that occasion, he invited me to lunch and we talked about the situation. It was a crucial period with the government weakening, because there had been some Japanese offensives, a couple of them, one in Central China and one in South China, which had brought the Chinese to a fairly dangerous pass. Well, I said I felt that we should be getting more support from the communists in this, and why didn't they work more together? Well, that angered Zhou. [Laughter] He virtually walked out on me.

But I'll have to say, he later became the prime minister of China under the communists, and if there was a moderate communist around, I think Zhou was it. I often wonder how he ever managed to get through all those years with Mao Zedong. Mao, of course, was at the opposite pole. He was a very radical type, who had no accommodation for anyone who wasn't a communist and who wouldn't follow the line. So there we had Zhou, I know on many occasions, helped people who were in trouble with the communists, and I think, in general, he was moderate where he could be in operating the government, but that couldn't have been very much because of Mao and his overall policies, which were extraordinary radical.

Q: In this Chungking period, at least some of the literature is highly critical of Chiang Kai-shek and the Nationalist Government.

DRUMRIGHT: Well, if you know the media, if you know those writers and people—you mentioned White; he was one of them—and most of the others, there were a few objective reporters up there. But by and large, the people you would read were those who seemed to sympathize with the communists. I think perhaps in many cases it was not a question of

being pro-communist, as such; it was just that they felt that the government had failed. And it was weak, as I said.

But I think they failed to take into account the bitterness, the length, the horrible happenings of the war. That is to say, the Chinese took on a very strong foe, as we found out later ourselves, and it was a foe that was determined to conquer China in one way or another, and they put well over a million men into that effort in China, with their first-class military equipment and the like, and generals and so on. The Chinese, I think, wisely, under Chiang Kai-shek's management, just withdrew where they couldn't continue the scrap on the front lines.

I think Chiang made a mistake in the early days when he threw his forces into the defense of the Shanghai area. This was bound to fail with the tremendous Japanese offensive that took place. I think after that, Chiang learned that he had to fall back where the Japanese attacked in strong force, which they would, but he would hold the line wherever he could, and he did that all over the place from north to south, with very little in terms of aid or assistance, and without any industry to back him up, to speak of, and with an economy that was barely able to feed its people.

It was really quite a saga, in my opinion. I just feel that many of our people could not appreciate the efforts that the Chinese went through to support that war.

Q: Were you privy to any of the consulate between General Stilwell and Chiang Kai-shek?

DRUMRIGHT: I knew in a general way. I had known Stilwell. I had met him in Peking when I was a language officer. He had been a language officer there, too, before me, of course. He was older. Then he happened to be military attach# when the war came on. But he seemed to spend most of his time in Peking, which was behind the lines. Peking was taken in the first days of the war by the Japanese, occupied by them. He didn't seem, as I recall it, to come out behind the lines to where the Chinese were—I'm speaking of Hangzhou now—until he was being relieved, which was in, I believe, the late spring

of 1938. Somehow he had not endeared himself to Chiang. I'm not quite clear on the circumstances. But when he came out, as I recall it, in 1938 to bid farewell to his Chinese military friends, he wanted to call on Chiang Kai-shek, we tried to arrange a call through the embassy, and I recall that we were never able to effect it, which indicated to me that Chiang had no interest in even seeing Stilwell at that time.

So it was not until—when?—1941, '42, that he was sent out there at the instance of General Marshall, I'm sure. They were old friends and buddies. Well, Stilwell was a language officer in China, he'd been out there as attach#. I suppose it seemed quite natural to assume that he was the logical choice for the job. But I'm afraid somebody back there didn't take into account that there was no love lost between Chiang and Stilwell, and that was certainly proved after Stilwell came out there. He had, of course, been in Burma, in charge of the forces in Burma, and had suffered some pretty severe losses. When he came to Chungking as chief of staff, I think they called the job he was to take, but I don't believe he ever served that job effectively. [Chuckles] He was always wanting to go back to reconquer Burma and that sort of thing. He seemed to think that was preeminent over fighting the Japanese out there on the east front. This was a position with which I'm sure Chiang Kai-shek was strongly against. [Chuckles]

Well, anyway, I think history has proven, or shown, that it was an unfortunate appointment. It never worked out, and the two men and their staffs never worked together. That situation was not corrected until they sent Al Wedemeyer toward the end of '44, when they recalled Stilwell. I think Pat Hurley had come out as a special representative of Roosevelt and had looked the situation over. On the basis of his assessment, he had recommended Stilwell be withdrawn. I think it was a wise assessment and recommendation. It was carried out, and Al Wedemeyer came, and he immediately set things right. They really started working very closely with the Chinese in cooperation. Chiang sought his advice, and he saw Chiang frequently, and they exchanged views and opinions. It was a complete turnaround.

Q: You weren't there at the time that Wedemeyer came out?

DRUMRIGHT: I was there when he first arrived. I was there for a month or two, but, of course, Gauss was recalled, also, then. As I said in my first report, Gauss was not sympathetic to the government. He felt that they had failed and were failing, they wouldn't fight or didn't fight, and he had no use for all that in his mind. He believed that it would be better, perhaps, to try to join forces with the communists. Now, that was an opinion shared by some of the other officers in our embassy and some with Stilwell. Vincent was there and George Atcheson, for a while. I think Atcheson first, and then Vincent. Vincent went back and became the director of the Bureau of Far Eastern Affairs.

Q: You were interned by the Japanese in Shanghai. Did you go from Chungking to Shanghai?

DRUMRIGHT: I explained that in my first report. I flew. We had an air service actually run by an American outfit, from Chungking to Hong Kong. I took that flight and arranged for a ship passage to Shanghai.

Q: Why is that?

DRUMRIGHT: Well, I had a dog, for one thing, that I was taking along. I had flown it down to Shanghai, and the air service was not very good between Hong Kong and Shanghai. There was a good passenger service, two British lines operating. They were still operating when I booked, which was at the end of November of '41. I boarded the ship—I think it was the 29th of November, and we duly arrived in Shanghai on the second of December. That was just a week before the blow-up. But unfortunately, a colleague of mine assigned in Shanghai at the time was also in Hong Kong on a little leave, and he took the other ship that was run by the other line. The other line ship got partway up to Shanghai and was ordered by the British naval authorities to turn around and go back. Mine was also to be ordered that way, but the message never arrived, somehow, so our ship went on in.

We were able to disembark there; I was. I think the first question I had posed to me when I went to the consulate was, “Where is Ingdoll (phonetic)?” Well, unfortunately, Ingdoll had been dumped back into Hong Kong and, tragic as it was, he was killed in a fall in the interned quarters during the internment.

Q: So he was interned, as well?

DRUMRIGHT: He was interned there, yes.

Q: But you were going to Shanghai on an assignment?

DRUMRIGHT: Yes, I was reassigned there. I was to take over the job that Edmund Club had been operating, which was the head of the land office, so called, which took care of our properties there, the properties of Americans, took care of protection of Americans, and that sort of thing. I was to take over control of that job, which I had served in that office when I went there in '34. Here I was going back to be in charge of it this time. I was the assistant there on the first assignment. But, of course, we barely managed to get into the office before the war came.

Q: When you were interned—I don't think you elaborated on that the last time. Exactly what did the Japanese do?

DRUMRIGHT: We were, fortunately, given over to the control of the Japanese consulate general there. We didn't see much of them. We worked through the Swiss consulate, which was looking after American affairs. But in general, we were of no complaint. We were well treated by the Japanese, with the assistance of the Swiss. We were first interned in a hotel just across the road from the consulate general in Shanghai, but after about six weeks, they sent us out to an even more comfortable assignment. [Chuckles] Over at the end of the settlement, the other end of the settlement, where we had a comfortable six, seven months before they made the arrangements for the return of all of us to the

States in an exchange arranged with the Japanese to take place in Louren#o Marques, in Portuguese East Africa.

We were not able to do anything. We were able to take walks, we were able to go out occasionally and have a meal in a Chinese restaurant. We were able to live a fairly comfortable life, without harassment, except for three or four of our people who were picked up early on, and a few of our citizens, like—well, I think our assistant naval attach# was interned for a while. He was questioned, of course, by the Japanese, and the editor of an anti-Japanese journal there was picked up and put in jail for several months. He had a rough time. And one or two others. But by and large, the official and civilian communities were well looked after. In fact, the civilians were not even interned for more than a year after the war started.The senior American diplomat at the consulate general in Shanghai nominally was Frank Lockhart, Frank P. Lockhart, an old line officer. But unfortunately, he had come down with—I believe it was hepatitis, and was in a hospital at the time of Pearl Harbor. He remained there virtually throughout the whole incident.

The number-two was Edwin F. Stanton, an old-time, longtime China language officer and officer who had served around in different parts of China, a very fine officer who looked after things most admirably in the absence of Mr. Lockhart. But there wasn't a great deal to do, really; it was just to wait and hope that we'd get out, which we did. It was about the end of June of '42 that the official contingent was sent out and we joined our colleagues from Japan and north China in Louren#o Marques, and all went back on the Gripsholm.

Q: It is interesting, the contrast between the treatment of the diplomatic and civilian population and that treatment of our soldiers.

DRUMRIGHT: Military had a little tougher treatment. Well, Club, down in Hanoi, had some rough treatment. He had been reassigned to Hanoi not long before. As I said, I took his job in Shanghai. He was a single officer down there, and I think they put him in the hoosegow for a while. But he got out, too, on the swap of diplomats.

Q: They didn't waste much time in reassigning you to China. You went back a year later.

DRUMRIGHT: I got home in August. We got back to New York in August of '42, and after a few days in New York, I went to Washington, and I was given some jobs there for a while, a couple of months, I think, writing reports and that sort of thing. Then I went to see my relatives out in the middle west and was told while I was out there that I was going to be assigned to London. [Chuckles] In fact, I had shipped some of my gear over there. But when I got back to Washington—or even before I was informed that I would be going back to China, because we were opening up a number of posts in the hinterland that we had not had open during the previous assignments. We were going to open up posts in south China, at Kweilin; we were going to open up a post at Chengdu, northwest of Chungking; we were opening a post in Longxi, that's in Ganzu Province; and then also one in Dihua, or Urumqi, in Xinjiang. That was way over near the Soviet border.

So I was asked my preference at the time, and I chose Chengdu. So I returned to Chungking in January of '43 and was reassigned up to Chengdu, where I spent a few months, and where we were building an airport so that our bombers could attack Japan from there. I had a few months rather on the quiet side in Chengdu. I lived in the missionary community and educational community, basically. I had a room there in a home.

But then I was informed later that there would be an opening in Sian if I would like to go there, or Longxi, and I wrote back immediately and said I would like to go to Sian, which is north in northwest China, but toward the east side, only about 100 miles from areas occupied by the Japanese and also to the north by the communists.

So I spent the months from about May of '43 to June of '44 in the Sian area.

Q: What was your position there?

DRUMRIGHT: I was secretary on assignment. I think I was, at the time, a second secretary.

Q: Did we have a consulate there?

DRUMRIGHT: No, we had no consulate. I was the only officer there, and I did everything from writing dispatches to sending in a few coded messages. [Chuckles]

Q: What was our interest in Sian?

DRUMRIGHT: Well, it was to report on happenings in those outlying areas from the embassy. I found, among other things, that I was not welcomed by the commanding general up there, an old line Chinese general. [Chuckles] He never received me.

Q: Why is that?

DRUMRIGHT: Well, he didn't like the idea of having a consul or a representative of the embassy in his back yard, apparently, but he did send his chief of staff and things like that. I got to know him. I knew the governor of the province, met him. I knew the mayor of the city and the like. I met all those people and kept in touch with them. But I also spent a lot of time traveling up there. I traveled way over to the east end of the unoccupied areas. I visited with the missionaries, I visited with some Chinese officials, including a military commander, I remember, in the Hunan area, and also the commander down in—well, it's a little south. Then I traveled also to the areas to the south. Yes.

Q: These were Nationalist officials?

DRUMRIGHT: Oh, yes. We were still in the Free China-occupied areas.

Q: Against whom were they focusing their military effort?

DRUMRIGHT: In the area north of Sian, they had a line against the communists. Their relationship was poor. They had struggles and conflicts from time to time. So there it was mostly, or partly, against the communists. Again, the commander there had the west bank of the Yellow River over to the east and a little to the north.

Then over to the east, it was strictly a situation opposing the Japanese, who were to the north, north of the Yellow River, but with some considerable forces, which, by the way, in about April or about May, April to May of '44, launched a campaign, an offensive, through this northern Henan area.

Q: The Japanese did.

DRUMRIGHT: Yes. They wanted to link up. There was a railway that ran from there to Hangzhou, the Peking-Hangzhou railway, and they wanted to control all that line. They were successful in doing that. The Chinese were not very effective. They defended as best they could, but there wasn't much to do. It was the usual withdrawal and trying to hang on, basically—period. Yes, I reported on all these affairs there, and I had a pretty hot time getting our people out of Henan and northern Hubei.

Q: Did the missionaries that you visited—

DRUMRIGHT: They got out that time. We had advised them back in '37 from Hangzhou, to leave at their option, or at least get their families out. Most of them did, but some of them were hanging on, and some even had families there, still, in '44, back in this enclave that was still under the control of the Free Chinese. But this time, when I wrote them and advised them to leave, I think about 95% left.

Q: So there was a sense, when you were there, that Sian was in danger?

DRUMRIGHT: This is more the area to the east of Sian, Luoyang, and on over to the east as far as the unoccupied area stretched. There were scattered missionaries around here

and there, all over the place. I had a list of them, and I wrote them, kept in touch. I called on a bunch of them when I went out there earlier in '44.

Q: Did our military assist in any way the—

DRUMRIGHT: We had no military up there.

Q: What about in terms of supply?

DRUMRIGHT: We couldn't supply them. About all we could do was fly in a few supplies that Stilwell corralled and used down in the southwest, mostly. There was no getting much military equipment into China; it was impossible. There was nothing but the air route or the Burma road, and that proved not to be a success. You couldn't get anything much of it. Spent a lot of effort on it and a lot of time and money, but it didn't prove to be anything of a success.

So yes, I had an interesting time up in northwest China. I'm glad I chose that assignment. It was very interesting and there were a lot of things going on up there. I had it to myself; there was no one else there. I was reporting regularly to Chungking all the time.

Q: You left China.

DRUMRIGHT: Well, I was recalled, finally. I was recalled, I think, in June, about the beginning of June of '44. I was ordered back to Chungking. Before I went back, I did take a trip up to Longxi and to Qinghai. Those are provinces to the west, pretty far out to the west. I'd never been to those areas. I spent the better part of a month up in those areas. We had a man in Longxi, Harry Stephens, at the time, a consul.

I went over to Qinghai. Of course, we had nothing there. We didn't even have missionaries there. This was a Muhammadan area of China. They had an interesting leader over there by the name of Ma. He was good enough to invite me to his villa, or palace. He had quite

a place. He was a unique person in terms of having defeated the communists who tried to come through his area on a long march. He had chased them out of there. [Chuckles]

Q: So he had his own military force?

DRUMRIGHT: He had his own military, yes, and it was a pretty good one.

Q: In these area in west China, where you were stationed, or where you traveled, did you get any sense of how the ordinary people felt about the three forces that were impinging on them—the Nationalist Government, the communists, and the Japanese?

DRUMRIGHT: I'd say, in general, the population supported the war effort.

Q: Against the Japanese.

DRUMRIGHT: Yes, they did. They had a foreboding of what would happen if they came under Japanese control. We had had some inkling of it by way of what happened in Manchuria and what was happening in North China. In fact, hundreds and thousands—I don't know how many—a few million Chinese voluntarily left the occupied areas and made the long march over into the unoccupied areas during wartime, which shows how they felt about it.

Q: What about their attitude toward the communists?

DRUMRIGHT: I don't think there was much of a position about that. I don't think it impinged on most of the Chinese, except those who were in the communist areas or who were right near the communist areas. The people, in general, knew very little about the communists and what they were doing. They were trying to spread their message, their propaganda, and I think they had some success with some of the so-called educated class and intelligentsia. They drew some into Yunnan, even. They had some go there. And they did have quite a swing, as I indicated before, with the media and that sort of thing.

Q: From your knowledge in that particular area, were they any more successful in their fight against the Japanese than were the Nationalist forces?

DRUMRIGHT: They were part of the Nationalist forces. For instance, the general in Sian, he was part of the Nationalist forces. He'd been sent there by the Central Government to defend—

Q: The communists and Nationalists were fighting each other, as well as each fighting the Japanese.

DRUMRIGHT: There was a little. It was only a little skirmishing here and there at the time I was up there. I think the biggest incident was one that happened down in a province in Central China, called Anhui, where the communists were trying to form a new military force, let's say, starting in about '41. They had some little success, apparently, in that. They built up an army of sorts, and eventually came to a clash because the national army, the national military, felt this was a threat to them and their integrity. So there was a clash in which this communist force was driven out, or defeated. That occurred in 1941 or '42.

Q: But the suggestion is made, or at least that I understood from your previous comments, was that the media and some intellectuals felt that the communists were fighting the Japanese, or would have fought the Japanese.

DRUMRIGHT: Well, the truth is, they never did fight the Japanese. I will go on record as saying that. They avoided fighting the Japanese. I think I mentioned that in my previous report. Their motivation at the time was to build up their own forces for the fight that came later. In that, they were pretty eminently successfully. They knew they couldn't fight the Japanese head on, any more than the Nationalists found that they couldn't, after several disastrous fights. It was a matter of trying to hold what you had and retreating when the enemy advanced on you with his superior forces. That's what it amounted to.

So anyone who says the communists were fighting the Japanese, I would say, “Let's prove it.” I never saw any of it in my time there. They did build themselves up, as evidenced by their fight after the war was over against the Nationalists, the National Government, with very a very big shot of aid from the Soviet Russians, who handed over all the equipment and arms of the army of Japan, which they had succeeded to when they rushed into Manchuria at the end of the war. Sure.

Q: You moved to another troubled spot right after the war, and that was Korea. You were in South Korea when the North Koreans invaded. Isn't that correct?

DRUMRIGHT: Let's see. I was in England for a while first. I was back in the State Department. I went home in the fall of '44, and I joined the State Department at the beginning of '45. I urged help to the Nationalists out there. The war was now coming to an end, and it did eventually come to an end, as we know, in August of '45, with the surrender of the Japanese. But it took the atomic bomb, a couple of them, to bring the Japanese around to their senses on it.

But meantime, the situation in China had got much worse. I left in '44. The war was over in '45. Wedemeyer assisted the Chinese, a great job on his part, to get back into the occupied areas with the Chinese Army, and they did successfully occupy most of those which were not already occupied by the communists. Then the Nationalists made the big mistake of trying to put their premier, their main forces, up into Manchuria, which was a long run of about 1,500 miles against the prepared and well-armed communist forces, communists armed by the Soviets, with the Japanese equipment which they had taken at the end of the war. And there it was too much. The Nationalists were defeated, and that put another black mark against their record in Washington and so forth. We had already pretty much stopped any aid to them. We had helped them to get back into the old occupied area, and that was about it.

We then decided the only thing to do was to try to work out an armistice or a settlement or agreement between the government and the communists on the running of China, and it was then at the end of '45 that George Marshall was sent out on that ill-fated mission. I had said back then it would not succeed. I was against it, I think as I mentioned.

Q: What was your position in Washington?

DRUMRIGHT: I was chief of the China Division. My superior was John Carter Vincent, who believed in it, and helped set up the Marshall mission. And that was that.

So our aid to the national government stopped. In its place, we sent Marshall to try to come to a settlement with the communists, bring them into the government, probably with the idea of coalition, but even that failed. The communists were not interested at that time, and the national government didn't see much in it, either, from their point of view. So it was a failure, and Marshall pulled out of there in the early months of '47, shouting, “A plague on both your houses!” [Laughter] That was that.

Then from then on, it was a fight. The fight went on between the communists and the national government, with the government steadily on the losing side. They would win a battle now and then, and generally they continued to lose and to fall back, with the communists taking, I believe, Nanking in '48, the capital, and with Shanghai falling about the middle of '49, I believe.

Q: Where were you at this point?

DRUMRIGHT: I was in Korea. I went there in '48.

Q: You were no longer involved with China?

DRUMRIGHT: I was not involved in it. I had left the State Department in the fall of '46, and I was out. I was not simpatico with the policy, and they had no job for me there, so they

sent me to London, where I pursued Far Eastern affairs pretty far removed from what was going on in China. It did not impinge much on the job in London at the time. The British were much more concerned about India and Southeast Asia at that time.

Q: Your assignment to Korea was in what capacity?

DRUMRIGHT: Let's see. Actually, in the spring of '48, I was reassigned first to be deputy to Sebald, a political advisor in Japan. I wasn't too keen about that job, but I went. Like a good soldier, a Foreign Service officer should. I arrived there in June, early June, of '48, and joined Sebald and his political advisors' group. I was helping out as the number-two there. Bill was an old line. He was a Japanese language officer, a Navy man. Not a Foreign Service officer, but a Navy man who had studied Japanese and who had even practiced law in Japan. He had a wide knowledge of the Japanese and of Japan, and did a fine job there as the political advisor to MacArthur. I think MacArthur listened to him pretty carefully, which was all to the good.

I was not even settled in my job when one day we got a telegram saying Drumright would be needed in Korea, where a Korean Government was coming into power. There had been an election, a pretty free one, and Syngman Rhee was being elected president and would be taking power in August of '48.

So we needed to establish an office, a mission, there, and get going, because we would have a lot to do. Our part of Korea had been a military governorship since '45. We had pretty much run the south of Korea with some help from some top-flight Koreans. But now they were going to be taking over and assuming the government.

Q: What was your position then?

DRUMRIGHT: My position was deputy. I really had no definite position. I really took the place of Joe Jacobs there for a month or two, Joseph E. Jacobs, who later was ambassador to Czechoslovakia. Jacobs had been a China language officer, like myself,

many years before. But he hadn't served much in the Orient—15 or 20 years. But he had been sent out for that job and had served there, I guess, for a couple of years, and had done an excellent job with the military. There the main show was the military at that time. We were really in an advisory position, much like Sebald was with MacArthur in Japan. But we had a different title for it.

Very shortly after I arrived, Jacobs left and the consulate more or less closed down. We had a little consulate there, with the thought that we would open a mission, with the idea that we would, and we did. I started it up, looking for buildings and things, and John J. Muchow came on as special representative of the President, I think in probably about the end of September, and assumed that special representative job, which went on for a number of months before we had the official recognition with Muchow becoming ambassador. And with that, the establishment of an embassy, a formal embassy.

Q: At that point, you were political advisor?

DRUMRIGHT: I was assigned as counselor of embassy, or later we started calling it deputy chief of mission. Yes. We established a large mission there. We had quite a few people there before things were stopped by the invasion. We had a 500-man military advisory group; we had 100 or more people in our economic AID mission; and we had 30 or 40 people in our embassy.

Q: How much contact did you have with the Koreans?

DRUMRIGHT: Oh, we had close contact with the Koreans. For one thing, we had got to know Rhee even before he became president, and we got to know some of the other chief people around there, the man who became prime minister, some of the chief legislators, and the like. Yes, we knew them.

Q: What was your impressions of Syngman Rhee?

DRUMRIGHT: Rhee was an old-line revolutionary. He, as a young man, came out of North Korea, what we know as North Korea now, and started agitating against the Japanese occupation. His agitation eventually became so open that he was exiled. After that, he made some headway, too, by the way. It wasn't hard to stir up Koreans, who had hated the Japanese and their occupation, and wanted to be free. He made enough headway to come to the Japanese attention and to be thrown out. For a while, I think he spent a few months or maybe a year or two in the Shanghai area of China, after which he went to the States, and he continued his revolutionary work, either from Hawaii or the mainland here, I think mainly in Washington, where the political power lay. Always working for a free Korea, but with very little chance of any success until the war came. After that, I think his hopes were immensely lifted and were realized, of course, on the defeat of Japan and the complete withdrawal of Japanese people and interests from Korea.

Q: He had a reputation of being rather autocratic.

DRUMRIGHT: Well . . .

Q: And self-seeking.

DRUMRIGHT: I think we must remember that Korea, from its inception, was a country of dynasties, ruled by a powerful king. That obtained right up until the Japanese took it over. If anything, they ruled the Korean people with even more rigor than their own rulers had in the past.

As for Syngman Rhee, he was an educated man. He knew about democracy in America, he had studied it there, and he was elected basically under democratic regimen in Korea. He took over as president to establish an entirely new government. It perhaps took a little autocracy at the time to get something going in a country that had never known democracy, that had little in the way of education, people who had been educated. There

were a few, but not many, and most of those had been educated in Japan, if they were educated. So we had to start from base one.

As I look back on it, I wouldn't say he was terribly autocratic in those early years when I was there. He managed to establish a government. I think it was a government that was operating during the years I was there. He, I think, expected more help from us than he got.

Q: Help in what way? Economic assistance?

DRUMRIGHT: We had a fairly good economic program. I think it was beginning to take off in the about two years that we had to do something with it. We had a program of, let's say, about $100 million a year. We helped the Koreans and developed their economy, developed their banking system, their economic system, as such, even. They had some good men in the Ministry of Finance and in the bank and so forth, who had some ideas of Western economics and so on. There was progress being made. There was very little private economy. A good part of the economy was operated by the government. They had taken over the railroads and some of the big businesses at first, and that sort of thing that they had incorporated from Japanese ownership and the like. So things were moving along, as I think we felt in the embassy, not too badly. There was hope that something could come out of this.

As I said, Rhee, I think, was disappointed, particularly in terms of our military help. We left some stuff when we removed our forces from Korea. Our two last divisions left as of June 30, 1949. That was about a year after Rhee took over, and a little over a year after we arrived there. We had opposed it. We said it was premature. By “we,” I mean in our embassy, the ambassador and the rest of us.

Q: You mean this equipment?

DRUMRIGHT: We opposed the withdrawal of our military forces. We said it would make a dangerous situation much more dangerous, and we also advocated a much strong rearmament of the South Korean Defense Forces than the arms they had, which were not much. The position in Washington was that we would help them establish a little more than what we would call a constabulary, perhaps a combination of police and military, to take care of the law and order in Korea, and provide defense against the North if needed.

Evidently, of course, there was a strong feeling in the United States that the war was over, we had done our bit, and other than keeping forces in a few places like Japan and Germany, we would pull out. Unfortunately, Korea was not added to that list. We pulled out. The proof of the pudding there was that within about a year, we had a big invasion. All right. Well, anyway, we pulled the forces out, leaving very little to oppose a North Korean invasion, and we did not supply the South Koreans with the arms that would be required to put up a strong defense against a very strong North Korean military. That was not done.

Q: If the embassy foresaw a threat from the North, or at least felt that the South Koreans should have been better armed and we should have remained there, I assume that this information was forwarded to Washington.

DRUMRIGHT: Oh, sure. Sure.

Q: Then how do you explain the reverse, when Korea was taken off of the "danger list," so to speak?

DRUMRIGHT: Well, as I indicated a moment ago, we felt—back in Washington, anyway—that the war was over, and we had provided adequate arms and advisory force to do what was necessary.

Q: So we did have an advisory force?

DRUMRIGHT: We had a 500-man advisory force, which was helping the South Koreans organized and train their forces, which amounted to about 100,000. Now, the North Koreans had several hundred thousand men under big arms, tanks, artillery, heavy artillery, everything, what have you.

Q: But the United States still had 100,000 troops?

DRUMRIGHT: We had two divisions when we pulled out our final forces and left only an advisory group of 500 men.

Q: Oh, I see. The 500 men were after.

DRUMRIGHT: Yes. That's all we had. So this was virtually an invitation to the North Koreans and their backers, the Soviets and the Chinese communists, to come in. Added to that was the fact that Dean Acheson, in an address in January of 1950, placed Korea outside the limits of our strategic interests. So I think, all in all, you can say that because we had drawn a line that did not include South Korea within our strategic limits, we had pursued the policy we had in the military, which was to lightly arm a force of about 100,000, and withdraw our own forces. That was the policy.

Q: I assume, then, that the State Department operated contrary to the advice of the ambassador.

DRUMRIGHT: The State Department obviously was operating—and perhaps the President and his staff were operating in a position that was very contrary to what we had recommended from the embassy in Korea. The upshot of all that was the invasion. There I would have to say we were constantly worried about it, and the South Koreans, especially their military, were even more worried about it. They kept telling us and saying that the North Koreans were getting on the move and were preparing for something up there, but I have to admit that we didn't take it quite as seriously as we perhaps should have in that light. But I'm afraid that in light of the situation in Washington, we would have merely

reported it was an extraordinarily dangerous situation and we should take some action to curb it, but we didn't.

That is, up until the invasion, whereupon President Truman took charge and did quite a job of backing up. But by then, of course, we had a big invasion and the South Koreans were doing what they could, the best they could. They fought valiantly, but they had to go back. We had to all go back.

We finally ended up in a little Pusan perimeter, so called, about 60 miles long and 40 miles wide, over to the coast, where we managed to defend, largely because by that time we had got some fairly strong forces in, including part of them from Japan and some from the States. We had a better inkling of what was going on and what we had to do.

Q: Did the ambassador remain throughout this period, or was there a change?

DRUMRIGHT: No, Ambassador Muchow remained. He remained basically with the Korean Government in Pusan and tried to hold the hand of President Rhee.

I never did quite end up my little spiel about Rhee and his arrogance or whatever. [Chuckles] He was very disappointed with us because of our position. You can understand that position.

Q: Yes.

DRUMRIGHT: And I recall going south to touch base with him after we had to withdraw from Seoul, the capital, and go south. I was told by Muchow to make contact with him. He had left without even notifying us, which I didn't care much for, or anybody. But I did get in touch with him in a town down the line about 100 miles below Seoul. We had a long conversation one afternoon there, after I arrived, and he was extraordinarily bitter and critical of the US. I couldn't say very much. I felt considerable sympathy for him, and I wasn't able to give him any assurance at that time that we would be doing anything to

help, whether he would be kicked out altogether. Certainly if we didn't help, he'd have been out of there altogether in about two weeks. So it was a bigger experience which I subsequently reported to Washington.

But overnight, that night I went home. I was very tired. We hadn't had any sleep for a couple of nights. I went home, went to bed at a place we were staying there in this town, and during the night, a couple of my subordinates were listening to a portable radio I had brought out, and they got the message that Truman had ordered US forces into Korea to assist the South Koreans. Well, I was given this message early the following morning, and I immediately trotted over to see Rhee, to give him the good news. [Laughter]

Q: And what was his reaction?

DRUMRIGHT: His reaction was, “Well, I haven't seen anything yet, planes or anything.” [Laughter] But very little later, we had planes flying over that country, and we began to take steps back in Washington to put the machine into action, with the result that the offensive was well after MacArthur made his play at the Inchon landing. Things reversed rapidly. Yes.

Q: You weren't there when the Chinese crossed the border, though?

DRUMRIGHT: Yes, I was in Seoul.

Q: Oh, you were?

DRUMRIGHT: Yes, I was up there. We had a big to-do with Washington over whether we should cross the 38th parallel. After our forces had defeated the Chinese and North Koreans and driven them out of South Korea, the question then was: do we go north? Do we pursue these people? And there was a considerable opinion back in Washington, apparently, that we should let up on it there and stay at the parallel.

Q: What was the embassy feeling?

DRUMRIGHT: Our feeling was to go on and drive them all out of Korea and unify the country. That's what we had gone there for in the first place.

Q: But the question was, should the forces—oh, I see. Crossing.

DRUMRIGHT: They would cross the 38th parallel and go on into North Korea, which they did. Finally, Washington gave its assent after some reluctance, and MacArthur divided his forces then. He was in favor of it, of course. He wanted to hit them hard and drive them out and bomb the Chinese forces.

Q: Well, the Chinese hadn't entered yet, had they?

DRUMRIGHT: No, they hadn't entered then. They entered about a month later.

Q: Close to the border.

DRUMRIGHT: I mean after the Chinese entered, he wanted to really take them out. No, for a month or so, or five or six weeks, we went on north with very little resistance from the North Koreans, who were withdrawing as best they could into Manchuria. They were not putting up any substantial resistance anywhere, so we had virtually occupied the whole of North Korea, most of it, by the time the Chinese came in.

I understand we had been warned of that possibility. I believe Zhou En-lai had told the British or somebody, “Would you kindly inform the Americans that if they keep this up, we're coming in.” [Laughter] But nobody took it very seriously. The Chinese themselves had been in power only about a year when this took place, and they really hadn't got their feet much on the ground when they went in. I assume they must have been given some big assurances by the Soviets to help them out in going in there. In that invasion, they

used a lot of the old-line Chinese Nationalist troops, put them up as cannon fodder. Yes. Plenty of them got killed.

I was there. I was for that, and I was there when General Walker, the first commander, was killed in a jeep accident, unfortunately, and then was replaced by General [Matthew] Ridgway, both of them fine generals. They kept up the fight. But in the face of this avalanche of Chinese forces, the military, MacArthur and Ridgway, decided the best policy was to withdraw a reasonable distance, regroup, and then resume the offensive against the Chinese. Well, it would be mostly Chinese. The North Koreans had been pretty badly broken. So that's what happened.

Starting about March of '50, our forces went over to the attack and gradually drove the Chinese out. They could not support their forces that far down in Korea. Obviously they could not do it, especially with our complete command of the air and our bombing all lines of communications and that sort of thing. So we moved back rapidly and reoccupied Seoul, I think by about the first of April. I went up there, had a look around, and came back.

Then a short time later, I was reassigned to Washington. So I left Korea in the latter part of April, went to Japan and got a ride on a plane with John Foster Dulles, who was then a special advisor to the State Department. He'd been out on some Japanese negotiations at that time. Went back to Washington.

I think the attitude there, as I saw it, was, “Well, let's try to wrap this thing up and get it over with.” And there was an armistice. The Russians came around about July of '51, and proposed an armistice and discussions. Of course, the US was tired of it, too. But I was one of those who said we should go on and clean them out of Korea, and then we can talk if they want to discuss this situation. The Russians had come around obviously because they were being defeated. The Russians were not coming in. We had the atomic bomb, and they didn't quite have one. So they weren't going to stick their noses—

Q: What was your position in Washington?

DRUMRIGHT: I had no real position. I guess you could call kind of a floating advisor around there for a while. My advice was to carry on with the war and eliminate all resistance in all parts of Korea. Then we could discuss problems with the Chinese and Soviets if they wanted to.

Q: But this was not the prevailing sentiment?

DRUMRIGHT: That was not the sentiment that was adopted. The position was taken that we would go to the armistice, and that armistice is still in being, still right there now today. They still meet occasionally.

Q: It's an interesting place for tourists to visit.

DRUMRIGHT: I was there a couple of years ago, the first time I had ever visited Panmunjom, and that's where they still meet and talk. It's all empty rhetoric, nothing to it.

So for my pains, I was moved out of Far East, or the Orient, and assigned to India. Well, India's a little bit of the Orient, but didn't figure much in what was going on over there.

Q: Who was the prime minister at the time you were there?

DRUMRIGHT: Where?

Q: In India, when you got to Delhi.

DRUMRIGHT: [Jawaharlal] Nehru. I had the honor to meet Nehru a couple of three times, had a chat or two with him.

Q: What was your position?

DRUMRIGHT: I was political counselor of the embassy when I went to Delhi. The ambassador was—oh, my God, our most prominent.

Q: Chester Bowles?

DRUMRIGHT: No, he came later. Our old-line great man in Washington for years, Loy Henderson. Loy asked for me. They were planning to send another man there, but he heard that I was available, and so he asked for me. They sent the other man as counselor down in Ceylon at that time.

So I went out there not really caring much to go, and I found it a difficult, but interesting, assignment for a couple of years.

Q: Why difficult?

DRUMRIGHT: Because India is difficult to a newcomer. I mean, it's a very difficult country to get to know much of anything about. It was terribly difficult, all these different peoples, different languages, long-time history, occupation by the British, and then the takeover in '48 by the Indian administration from the British. That had been only three years before I went there. They were still feeling their way coming in. Difficulties with Pakistan. An inherent dislike on the part of Nehru and some of his cohorts for the United States. They just didn't have much use for us. They were really pro-British, if anything, even after all the years of subordination. I guess they felt the British were more sympathetic or something in those times. But we never took a front seat into the problems of India, except to develop a pretty good AID program, but one that was difficult to get off with in a huge country like that with so many diversities and problems.

Q: India is almost traditionally hostile to the United States, even today. How do you explain that, apart from their British tradition? It must be more than that.

DRUMRIGHT: No, I think they had some kind of suspicion of us. For one thing, of course, we were fairly friendly to Pakistan all this time, and they really wanted Pakistan to be a part of their unity, their kingdom, their country. That, of course, was spoiled by the British, along with some of the Pakistani leadership. So they had a feeling all along that we were, if anything, more sympathetic to the Pakistanis than to India. Other than that, I think it was just some inherent suspicion of the United States, not very much knowledge of us and what made us tick, and so forth, whereas they did have a pretty good knowledge of the British and what they were doing and what they were up to and so forth.

Anyway, there was that. I could feel it. I could sense it in Nehru and in the foreign office and the other people you met around in the government and the like, most of them. It was a feeling that I couldn't divest myself of until I went over to Bombay, where I felt there was an entirely different attitude and feeling about the United States.

Q: In Bombay, you had what job?

DRUMRIGHT: I went as consul general there by my own request. I never got along too well with Chester Bowles. Chet wanted to run everything his own way, and he brought his own people out. He listened to them, and he didn't listen to many other people. He was very pro-Indian, despite the rebuffs he got from Nehru and all. He was bent on helping India, and he did his best to help them. I'll say that for him.

Q: Would you say that relations between the two countries improved or just didn't change at all, even though he had a more favorable attitude?

DRUMRIGHT: I didn't see much change in my time there, which was most of the period when Chester Bowles was there. But I was not in Delhi. From what I could learn or sense, I didn't see any particular difference. And even today, the Indians are more likely to cotton up to the British, or even the Soviets, and they would like to cotton up to the Chinese,

although the Chinese have given them two or three pretty hard rebuffs. So we're off in the distance from them.

Q: Why do you say that Bombay was different?

DRUMRIGHT: Well, Bombay is on the west coast. It's a long-time trading center with the West, with Europe, and even with America. You had a different type of Indian people there. They had two or three different groups there, which seemed to be much more attuned to the West. You had a small group of people called the Parsis, who were traders and businessmen and some politicians, who seemed to have a much wider grasp of world affairs than the average Indian, even the civil servant. So you go down there and you get into this commercial and trading community, and you sense a different feeling entirely. I met a good many of those people. They were quite friendly, and I think they wanted good relations with the United States.

Q: I was only in Bombay very briefly. It's the New York City of India. I mean, it's a big city with commercial interests.

DRUMRIGHT: It's the prevailing economic center with its location on the west coast. Calcutta is a larger city, but it's a miserable place, just doesn't seem to get out of the dumps, you know. Never has.

Q: From India, you went back to State. In what capacity?

DRUMRIGHT: I went as deputy assistant secretary in the Bureau—I guess it was called East Asian Affairs by that time. Far East or East Asian, yes. I was there about a year. The main problems related to China and Indochina. Those were the main items on the agenda. On China, the Chinese communists were moving in a fairly aggressive way toward Taiwan, I thought, anyhow, and they absorbed a small set of islands given up by the Chinese Nationalists, and perhaps partly at our suggestion. Then the question of the offshore islands. Not long after I arrived there, within six months, we had the so-called

offshore island incident, wherein the Chinese communists attacked those islands near the coast. But it was largely artillery bombardment that went on for days and days that could have assumed a serious proportion.The Chinese communists were bombarding those offshore islands and threatening Taiwan, with which we had recognition and with which we had agreements.

The Chinese Nationalists held their ground very well in that offshore affair, and managed rather heroically to resupply it under adverse conditions. But I think the main factor there in the long run was the attitude adopted by President Eisenhower and Secretary of State Dulles, which was to support the Chinese Government there, the national government, in its position about those islands, and to even make some gestures not of a very friendly nature toward the mainland. I think that was adequate to scare off the communists if they had ideas of expanding on their shelling and the like. And perhaps also the Soviets may have advised them to lay off a bit.

Anyhow, that was over. But I had supported that position strongly myself, as a deputy assistant, and I was in charge, I believe, during—well, I was the ambassador in Taiwan when that occurred. But before that in Washington, I had asserted the position of the Chinese national government as much as I could.

Q: There was a political controversy in Washington and throughout the country roughly at that time, over this issue of having "lost" China to the communists.

DRUMRIGHT: That had been going on almost since '46. Well, not '46. Let's say—well, not the loss, exactly, but the impending loss. Well, it started, really, in '45 when we withdrew our support, basically, of the mainland Chinese against the communists. It was engendered by the Marshall mission and it went forward during the following years—the loss of Manchuria and the communist advance in China after the Marshall mission, and went on forward with the military affairs taking first place. There were desultory

negotiations which we attempted some part, but they were not successful. It ended up with the communists obtaining total control by the latter part of '49.

Q: But in effect, the charge, really, if you boil it down, was that State Department policy was such—or policy and personnel were such that they resulted in the "loss" of China.

DRUMRIGHT: Well, you can look at—

Q: You were involved and you knew these people. What is your feeling about that?

DRUMRIGHT: Well, we can look at the White Paper for a historical record, a considerable bit of it in that, about what was happening and what the policy was toward China and so on. My position was one of support of the government, which had been our ally in the war and which had continued the war against Japan under the most adverse of circumstances, which had fought through and which had reoccupied the eastern occupied areas of China, except for Manchuria. And I thought that we had best go ahead. Now, that would require considerable aid and assistance, and perhaps even military assistance, yes. But I felt it was the best position that we could take. This was before the communists had assumed the strength that they assumed later on after they obtained Manchuria and then took over North China.

Q: Knowing all of this and knowing how you felt, do you feel that had the United States taken a more aggressive position and a less equivocal position, that the communists would not have taken over China?

DRUMRIGHT: I felt there was a good possibility that the situation could have been turned around from the start in '45. I think Wedemeyer had made a very good start in '45 and '46, before he was withdrawn. And had we continued on that line and then resumed some concrete military assistance, and showed our support of the government and our non-support of the communists in a clear way, I think, yes, there was a good possibility that

the thing could have been turned around. That was my feeling, and I still have that feeling now.

Q: But part of that criticism evolved down to the personalities. Would you subscribe to the charge that was made by some at that time that there were people in the State Department who, for ideological reasons, supported—

DRUMRIGHT: Well, there was Alger Hiss, of course, but I wouldn't go so far as to say that John Carter Vincent or Dean Acheson, who was the Secretary at the time, were ideological partners of the communists. No. I think perhaps their position was that it was hopeless to continue helping the national government of China and that we had, therefore, better turn to the Chinese communists and try to work out a deal with them. That's what it really boiled down to. Whether they thought highly of communism is something else. I don't know. I hope not, because from what we can see today . . . [Laughter]

Q: We're running out of tape, so let's jump to your position as ambassador in Taipei. How would you evaluate this? This was in the Chiang Kai-shek era. How would you evaluate his leadership in Taipei in the period that you were there?

DRUMRIGHT: Well, I think it was excellent. He was leading a leadership that has turned Taiwan around entirely. I think he played a good part in the stabilization of the country after the defeat on the mainland and the reorganization that had to take place on Taiwan. He worked skillfully to continue the American relationship and hadn't given up completely, even at the beginning of 1950, when Dean Acheson had excluded Taiwan from that area which is of real strategic interest to the United States. I think there's no doubt that at that time, the US policy was to pull out of Taiwan entirely and hand it over to the Chinese communists, after which we'd have to deal with them as best we could, although we'd had some pretty sharp rebuffs already from the communists. They had very little use for us and were tied in with Soviet Russia. That was about the way it stood.

So Chiang Kai-shek was holding the line as best he could there, and trying to organize the government and the economy, but it was a hold-on operation entirely until the Korean War started, after which we had a realization that Taiwan, although damaged goods, was pretty vital to our interests, and we'd better step in and help them, something that we had not done basically since 1945 in China, at least late or at the beginning of '46.

So we stepped in and immediately sent an ambassador there, Carl Rankin, who did an excellent job, and started up a military and economic aid program, from which we have come forward to this day. I was Carl Rankin's successor in the early days of '58. Things were headed, I think, in the right direction.

Chiang was in control. He ran a pretty tight government. Lots of people objected to that, thinking that he should loosen up and set up a democratic form of government. Well, he couldn't quite do that with this big enemy over there on his flank, shouting from one day to another they were going to reunify with Taiwan, and so forth and so on. He had to be pretty careful, and he was that. He kept the communists out. There was no infiltration to speak of at all during those years.

By the time I came on, I think things were really sighted in a forward direction, both with the improvement of his military and rearming of it, and the economy, in particular, was beginning to move forward. This situation went forward during my administration, or my time there. I had a close liaison with Chiang Kai-shek and his administration, and we worked closely.

By the way, at the end of '54, after I left the Department, there was a defense treaty negotiated. It was quite an achievement. The Chinese there felt very much better after that. All right. Then again, after the settlement of the offshore incident, that is to say, the quieting-down of it, the Chinese on Taiwan again felt much more reassured about things.

So from that time on, they began to take off, and the tremendous economic development that has taken place to this day, which makes them about the 13th country in the world in terms of their foreign trade, if you can believe that, a country of 20 million people, and one which is fifth or sixth in its trade with the United States of America. So on and so on. You can recite all these.

Now, Chiang, who was pretty tight, a little arbitrary, eventually was succeeded by his son, Chiang Ching-kuo, who adopted a more liberal course. It took some time, but he did. Toward the end of his administration, which was—he died last year, wasn't it?—he had loosened up very materially. He felt assured enough to develop a much more liberal administration there, and yet keep the economy on its course, and appoint a Taiwanese to be vice president, a very wise choice, as it turns out, apparently. Lee Teng-hui has now become the president.

Q: That's a question I wanted to ask you.

DRUMRIGHT: He's done an excellent job. He's doing very, very well, indeed, and they may be in better shape yet. They're loosening up, they're becoming more democratic all the time, loosening up, more liberal in their political policies, and they have even pretty well stopped this so-called independence movement in its steps, it seems.

Q: That's the question. When you were there and Chiang was in charge, one of the issues that kept being raised was the imposition of the mainlanders onto the Taiwanese.

DRUMRIGHT: In 1948, there was even a rebellion. At that time, of course, Chiang had sent a governor over there to represent him, but he had no time at all then to do much about Taiwan. It was offshore there somewhere. This government he sent over there was a lamentable failure, and there was a revolution, a small one. There was some fighting. They had to put down this thing. I think there was some loss of life and so forth.

So that indicates that before Chiang got there in late '49, his government, that the Taiwanese were very unhappy. I think there had been some unhappiness ever since, basically. They feel somewhat separate from the mainland Chinese. But in general, they were satisfied to go along because they were not being absorbed by the communists. They did not want them. And they were gradually getting a little freer status as time went on, and certainly their economy was tremendously developing. Most of that development, by the way, went to the Taiwanese people, not to the mainlanders. They're the poor people of Taiwan today.

Q: Who are, the mainlanders?

DRUMRIGHT: Yes, the mainlanders. Most of them are in the military or in the government; they weren't in business and taking over these big industries that developed and so forth. It was the Taiwan people who did it.

Q: That's interesting. At the time that you were there, the suggestion was that there was a two-class society, the mainlanders and the Taiwanese. [Doorbell interruption]

DRUMRIGHT: Well, I'll have to let my . . .

Q: Thank you very much, Mr. Ambassador. This concludes our interview.

End of interview